

# On Site



**A choose your own adventure  
resource for young workers**

## Buuuzzzz. Buuuzzzz.

What the...

Where's the phone?

Crumpled receipts and loose change hit the floor as you fumble to switch off the alarm.  
*At least tomorrow's a day off!*

You are six months into your apprenticeship and life's pretty sweet at the moment. You moved into a new place with your mates recently and although money is tight, you can make your own rules.

You roll out of bed. In no time you've done your teeth and you're juggling toast and coffee as you struggle into your hi-vis gear. Then, lunch in hand you head out the front door.

Traffic is lighter than normal this morning so it's a smooth run to the job site. You arrive in time for a coffee and you join your work mates who are talking about their plans for the weekend. It's not long before your team is called over for the toolbox meeting and job allocation.



The site supervisor points in your direction.

'We are going to need those bricks by lunchtime, alright mate?  
Go grab one of the brick saws and get started right away.'

You nod. *No worries boss!*

You have used a brick saw before but it's been a while and it was a different model to the one on this job site. Do you:

Grabbing a saw from the truck, you head over to the boss to [ask for some help](#). The boss calls over Gary, one of the senior brickies to give you a hand. He's more than happy to—lucky because the retractable guard is faulty and is not working properly. Gary identifies the faulty guard and tags out the saw so no one else uses it.

After finding you another saw he spends the next ten minutes describing how it works, then showing you how to use it before watching you make a couple of practice cuts.



You're feeling confident after Gary's careful instruction and you're glad you did ask for help.

'Looking good mate. Once you've got enough bricks for a few loads, bring them into the house,' Gary says and leaves you to it.

## Cheers Gary.

After about an hour you're ready to take some bricks to the house. There are still more to cut but you can come back to them.

As you're getting your first load together, you notice a pile of scrap wood and piping at the entry to the house. Do you:

Grabbing a saw from the truck you head over to the bricks and get started. The **guard** is not retracting, but it's not a complicated job so you ignore it. *It'll be fine.*

Gary is one of the site's senior brickies and you respect the way he works. He's clearly walking over in your direction. You look up as he starts to say something and immediately feel pain explode in your left hand—it feels like someone has just stabbed you.

**Aargghhhh!!** You scream out in pain!

There is so much blood you can't tell exactly where it's coming from. Before the shock completely takes over you hear Gary shouting for someone to call an ambulance.

'He's cut off his fingers! Someone get on the phone and get the ambos out here now!'



Looking down you see your index and middle fingers are completely amputated from the first knuckle. You pass out.

You open your eyes to bright lights and an unfamiliar face

'Back with us mate. I'm Toni, I'm a paramedic.  
You're going to be okay.'

It takes a couple of seconds before you realise you are in the back of an ambulance on your way to hospital. They take you straight in for emergency micro-surgery where the doctors try and save your fingers.

Hours later you start to come around after the surgery. The smell of antiseptic fills your nose and your head feels like you've had a big night out without all the fun. Your Mum rushes to your side and you hear someone talking to her. It's your surgeon.

'The reattachment surgery looks to be successful for the middle finger, but the index finger was in pretty bad shape when he arrived and I'm afraid we were not able to save it.'

**What?!** You can't believe what you are hearing!  
You look at your Mum hoping she'll tell you it's not true, but she looks back and nods slowly, agreeing with the surgeon.

#### **Impacts on your career**

- You won't be able to do any work for at least 12 weeks.
- You are traumatised by the experience and drop out of your apprenticeship.

#### **Impacts on your life**

- You are permanently impaired with the loss of one finger and limited movement in the other.
- You can not support yourself financially and have to move back home with your parents.
- For the first eight weeks you can't dress yourself without assistance and start to lose confidence and self esteem.
- You can't drive for 12 weeks.





*Where did Gary say he wanted these bricks taken?*

As you tread over the pile of **debris**, you can feel it sliding underneath each step. You put your right foot down and hear something at the bottom of the pile crack. Your foot slides right and your knee goes to the left. SNAP!!!!

An excruciating pain goes straight through the middle of your knee and you fall to the ground hugging your leg tight to your chest. Someone brings a bag of ice and you hear the siren as an ambulance pulls up.



You are taken to hospital immediately but by now your knee has swollen massively. X-rays show you have torn your anterior cruciate ligament—the one that footballers are always out for—and you need a full knee reconstruction. It takes two weeks for the swelling to go down enough for the surgery.

#### **Impacts on your career**

- After the surgery you have to wear a leg brace and will need crutches for six weeks. You can't work.
- This adds months to your first year as an apprentice and longer on the lowest wage band.

#### **Impacts on your life**

- Doctors orders are no activity for at least three months, light activity (with physiotherapy) for the next three months but full recovery will take up to 12 months.
- You are out for the rest of the footy season!
- You can't drive for eight weeks.



**Clearing up** the pathway only takes five minutes and it gives you a chance to guzzle down some water and take a quick breather.

The wheelbarrow is full but now that the path is clear, it's easy work pushing it into the house.

The boss notices how quickly you are getting through the job this morning. 'Well done mate. You're doing a good job. Keep it up.'

Feeling pretty happy with yourself, you get back to it. As an apprentice, it's good to know your work is getting noticed.



But the boss isn't the only one that's noticed. One of the other tradies on site must have overheard the boss' comments and you can hear him approaching from behind. Turning, you see Mike standing there.



## Here we go again.

This guy has been giving you a **hard time** since you started on this site. He's a real piece of work.

'Hey kid!' he sneers. 'You little suck up. You some kind of brown noser?'

You are not sure what to do. You don't want to step on any toes, but it is really getting to you. Do you:





It's been a long afternoon and **man is it good to be home!** With the day's events still playing on your mind, you sit down and call your brother Dave.

He finished his apprenticeship a year ago so you tell him about what happened with Mike. He is a huge help! You have a long conversation and he describes some of the things he's seen on site with young workers **being harassed or feeling down**.

'To start with, I'd talk to your boss, or that Gary fella. If you're not comfortable talking to anyone at work about it, or you don't feel they are doing anything to help, there are other options for you,' Dave says.

'You could talk to **Workplace Health and Safety Queensland** and report the situation. They'll follow up and investigate your story.'

When you hang up, you feel relieved. Before you do anything else, you make a few calls to the contacts Dave suggested. They answer some more of your questions and give great advice.

Feeling confident and ready to address the situation on Monday morning, you finally kick off your boots and head for the shower. There's a barbeque at your place tonight and your mates are on their way over.

## ‘What’s going on out here?’



The shout punctuates your final **outburst**. The boss has heard your shouting and is walking over, glaring at you.

But he doesn’t need to hear a word. He sees Mike hunched over holding his face. No one can miss all the blood pouring from his nose.

‘**He started it,**’ you start to explain, but the boss doesn’t want to hear it.

You are fired on the spot, told to grab your stuff and get out of there.

It’s not until you are in the car that reality hits!



### **Impacts on your career**

- You will never get a reference from this job and it’s going to be hard finding a new apprenticeship with this record.
- It takes time to find placements so it lengthens the apprenticeship.

### **Impacts on your life**

- Mike is pressing charges. You have to appear in court next week.
- No work means no money. How are you going to pay off the car, or have enough for your phone, rent and your much loved social life!?



‘Yeah, whatever’, he mumbles as he walks away. **Phew!**

It has been a big week and this guy has been on your case for a while now. You did the right thing and he got the message, but you are really over his attitude. If he tries it again, you can talk to the boss or Gary. They’ve both said there is no place on this worksite for **bullying**.

Right now you have more important things to worry about. Just a few hours until the knock off and you’ve got a big date tonight!



# Young workers work health and safety links

[For employers of young workers](#)

[Health and safety information for young workers](#)

[Young worker injuries and fatalities](#)

[Bullying, fatigue, stress, violence](#)

[Slips, trips and falls](#)

[Guarding and reducing the risks](#)

[Health and safety in the construction industry](#)

[Housekeeping in the construction industry](#)

[Laws and compliance](#)

[Resources and downloads](#)

## Telephone services

WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915

Young Workers Advisory Service 1800 232 000

Workplace rights hotline 1300 737 841

For more information on young workers visit [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)  
or call WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915

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